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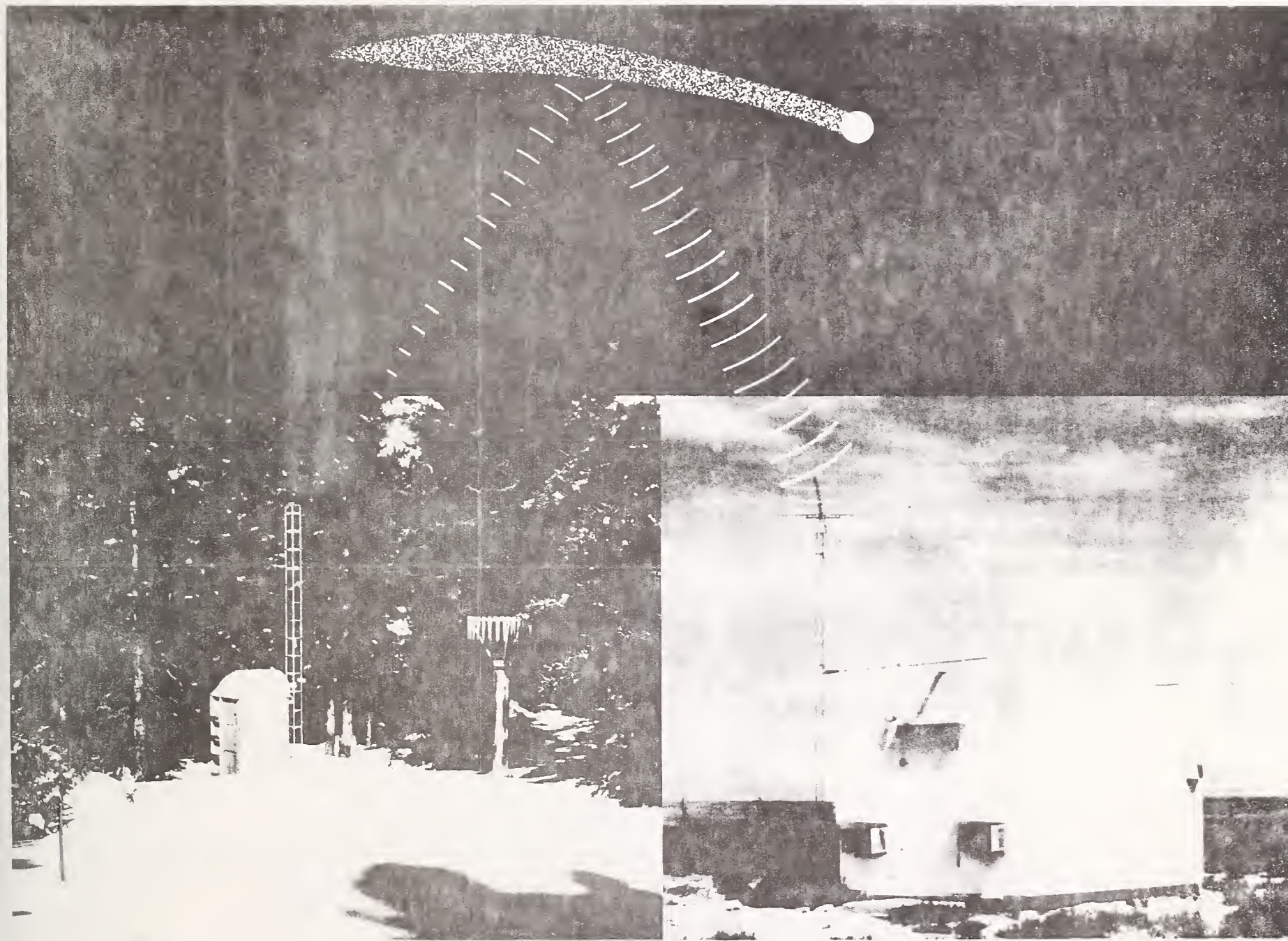


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# **WATER SUPPLY OUTLOOK FOR MONTANA**



**U. S. DEPARTMENT of AGRICULTURE ★ SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE**

Collaborating with

**MONTANA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION**

**OCTOBER 1, 1978**

Data included in this report were obtained by the agencies named above in cooperation with Federal, State and private organizations listed inside the back cover of this report.



## TO RECIPIENTS OF WATER SUPPLY OUTLOOK REPORTS:

Most of the usable water in western states originates as mountain snowfall. This snowfall accumulates during the winter and spring, several months before the snow melts and appears as streamflow. Since the runoff from precipitation as snow is delayed, estimates of snowmelt runoff can be made well in advance of its occurrence. Streamflow forecasts published in this report are based principally on measurement of the water equivalent of the mountain snowpack.

Forecasts become more accurate as more of the data affecting runoff are measured. All forecasts assume that climatic factors during the remainder of the snow accumulation and melt season will interact with a resultant average effect on runoff. Early season forecasts are therefore subject to a greater change than those made on later dates.

The snow course measurement is obtained by sampling snow depth and water equivalent at surveyed and marked locations in mountain areas. A total of about ten samples are taken at each location. The average of these are reported as snow depth and water equivalent. These measurements are repeated in the same location near the same dates each year.

Snow surveys are made monthly or semi-monthly from January 1 through June 1 in most states. There are about 1900 snow courses in Western United States and in the Columbia Basin in British Columbia. Networks of automatic snow water equivalent and related data sensing devices, along with radio telemetry are expanding and will provide a continuous record of snow water and other parameters at key locations.

Detailed data on snow course and soil moisture measurements are presented in state and local reports. Other data on reservoir storage, summaries of precipitation, current streamflow, and soil moisture conditions at valley elevations are also included. The report for Western United States presents a broad picture of water supply outlook conditions, including selected streamflow forecasts, summary of snow accumulation to date, and storage in larger reservoirs.

Snow survey and soil moisture data for the period of record are published by the Soil Conservation Service by states about every five years. Data for the current year is summarized in a West-wide basic data summary and published about October 1 of each year.

*COVER PHOTO: SOME OF THE DATA IN THIS REPORT HAVE BEEN RECEIVED THROUGH THE SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE'S NEW SNOTEL SYSTEM WHICH TRANSMITS INFORMATION VIA THE SPACE AGED METEOR BURST METHOD FROM DATA SITES TO MASTER STATIONS LIKE THESE.*

### PUBLISHED BY SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

The Soil Conservation Service publishes reports following the principal snow survey dates from January 1 through June 1 in cooperation with state water administrators, agricultural experiment stations and others. Copies of the reports for Western United States and all state reports may be obtained from Soil Conservation Service, West Technical Service Center, Room 510, 511 N.W. Broadway, Portland, Oregon 97209.

Copies of state and local reports may also be obtained from state offices of the Soil Conservation Service in the following states:

STATE	ADDRESS
Alaska	Room 129, 2221 East Northern Lights Blvd., Anchorage, Alaska 99504
Arizona	Room 3008, Federal Building, Phoenix, Arizona 85025
Colorado (N. Mex.)	P. O. Box 17107, Denver, Colorado 80217
Idaho	Room 345, 304 N. 8th. St., Boise, Idaho 83702
Montana	P. O. Box 98, Bozeman, Montana 59715
Nevada	P. O. Box 4850, Reno Nevada 89505
Oregon	1220 S.W. Third Ave., Portland, Oregon 97204
Utah	4012 Federal Bldg., 125 South State St., Salt Lake City, Utah 84138
Washington	360 U.S. Court House, Spokane, Washington 99201
Wyoming	P. O. Box 2440, Casper, Wyoming 82602

### PUBLISHED BY OTHER AGENCIES

Water Supply Outlook reports prepared by other agencies include a report for California by the Water Supply Forecast and Snow Surveys Unit, California Department of Water Resources, P.O. Box 388, Sacramento, California 95802 --- for British Columbia by the Ministry of the Environment, Water Investigations Branch, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, British Columbia V8V 1X5 --- for Yukon Territory by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Northern Operations Branch, 200 Range Road, Whitehorse, Yukon Territory Y1A 3V1 --- and for Alberta, Saskatchewan, and N.W.T. by the Water Survey of Canada, Inland Waters Branch, 110-12 Avenue S.W., Calgary, Alberta T3C 1A6.



# **WATER SUPPLY OUTLOOK FOR MONTANA**

and  
FEDERAL - STATE - PRIVATE COOPERATIVE SNOW SURVEYS

*Issued by*

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NOTICE

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THE FORMAT FOR THE MONTANA WATER SUPPLY OUTLOOK CHANGED THIS PAST WINTER. THE NEWSPAPER-STYLE REPORT HAS REPLACED THE BOOK-STYLE REPORT.

SIMPLY STATED, THE NEWSPAPER REPORT COSTS LESS FOR PRINTING, CAN BE PRINTED AND DISTRIBUTED IN A SHORTER TIME, AND IS EASIER TO PREPARE.

THE MAIN OBJECTION TO THIS STYLE REPORT APPEARS TO BE THE PROBLEM OF FILING THESE REPORTS FOR FUTURE REFERENCE. TO HELP THOSE WHO KEEP BASIC SNOW DATA WE PLAN TO PREPARE A BASIC DATA SUMMARY. CONTENT WILL BE CONFINED TO BASIC DATA ON SNOW COURSES, SNOW PILLOWS AND RELATED MEASUREMENTS.

THE 1978 BASIC DATA SUMMARY IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING PREPARED AND WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE UNTIL LATER. ANYONE NEEDING THIS DATA PRIOR TO RECEIPT OF THE PUBLICATION SHOULD IDENTIFY THEIR SPECIFIC NEED TO THE SNOW SURVEY UNIT, P. O. BOX 98, BOZEMAN, MONTANA 59715.

THANK YOU FOR BEARING WITH US DURING THESE PRINTING CHANGES.

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WATER SUPPLY CONDITIONS  
April through September 1978

Most headwater areas started the spring season with near average snowpack in higher elevations and below average snow in the lower elevations. Spring temperatures warmed gradually and most streams carried snowmelt runoff with little channel overflow. Heavy rain in south-central and southeastern Montana and northeastern Wyoming did cause extensive flooding, primarily in the Tongue, Powder, and Big Horn River drainages.

Streamflow in most streams held up well through the summer irrigation period.

Most areas west of the divide had April through September streamflow in the range of 90 to 100 percent of average. A small portion of the Bitterroot and Upper Clark Fork headwaters had above average runoff. The Philipsburg-Anaconda-Drummond area had some streams with below average runoff.

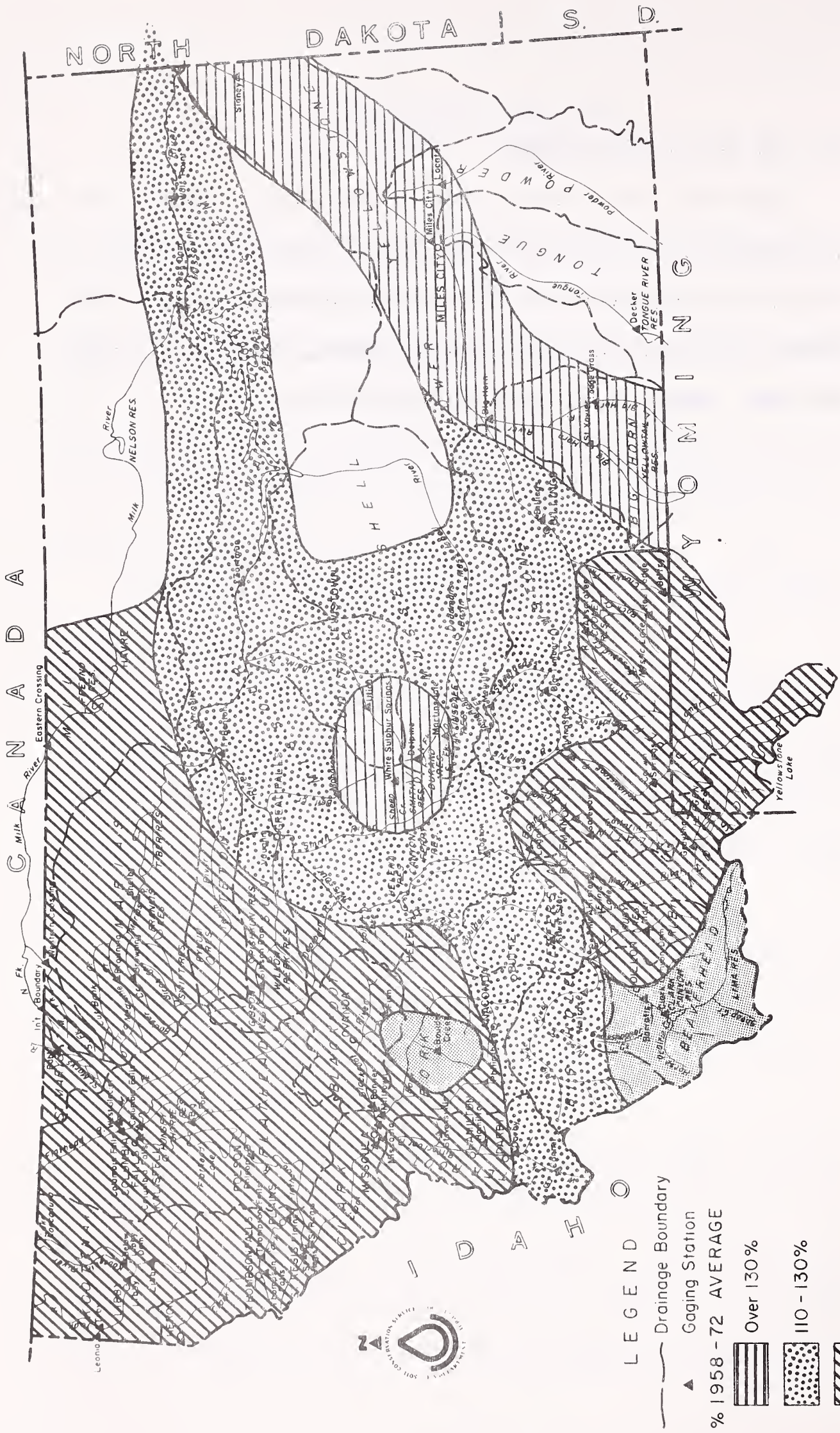
East of the divide, the Beaverhead River showed below average runoff. Most other drainages in the Missouri headwaters showed average or above average runoff. Above average flows were recorded from streams in central Montana.

The Yellowstone River basin showed above average streamflow for almost all drainages. Most headwater streams above Billings had 5 to 25 percent more runoff than average. The Big Horn River below Yellowtail Dam and smaller drainages flowing into the Big Horn and Yellowstone River below the Big Horn had runoff greater



than 140 percent of average.

Heavy Fall moisture has occurred over various areas of the state with snowfalls of one to two feet common in the southern mountains. Current warm weather has melted most new snowfall and only the highest elevations show any remaining snow accumulation. These rains and snowmelt have added moisture to the soil,



**LEGEND**

- Drainage Boundary
- ▲ Gaging Station
- % 1958 - 72 AVERAGE
- Over 130% (diagonal lines)
- 110 - 130% (dots)
- 90 - 110% (horizontal lines)
- 70 - 90% (vertical lines)
- Under 70% (cross-hatch)

MONTANA



PROSPECTIVE STREAMFLOW FORECASTS  
AS OF

1978 SNOW COVER COMPARISONS - PERCENT AVERAGE

1958-1972 Averages

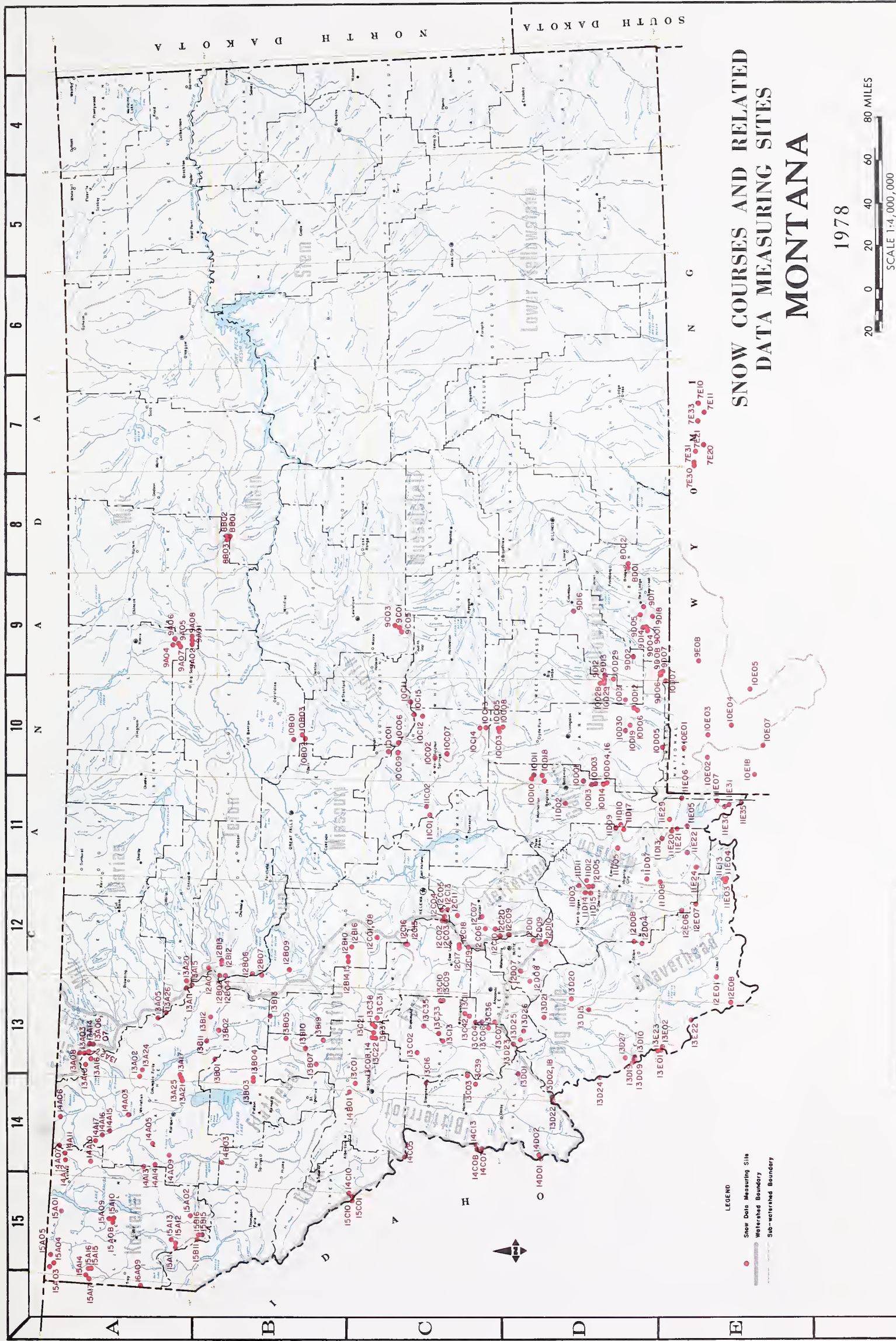
<u>Drainage</u>	<u>Jan. 1</u>	<u>Feb. 1</u>	<u>Mar. 1</u>	<u>Apr. 1</u>	<u>May 1</u>
Kootenai	128	94	92	77	82
Flathead	131	105	104	92	91
Upper Clark Fork	153	122	108	91	83
Lower Clark Fork	144	108	99	85	82
Bitterroot	192	134	120	103	98
Jefferson	139	112	122	107	103
Madison	129	120	128	108	104
Gallatin	131	121	124	107	100
Missouri Main-Stem	156	131	125	112	102
Judith-Musselshell	167	134	141	121	100
Marias-Teton-Sun	121	106	105	87	84
Milk	165	133	127	105	72
Yellowstone (ab Big Horn)	153	127	128	111	101
Little Big Horn	-	127	129	102	105
St. Mary's	114	103	93	71	67



**RESERVOIR STORAGE (Thousand Acre Feet) END OF MONTH**
**September**

Basin or Stream	RESERVOIR	Usable Capacity	Usable Storage		
			This Year	Last Year	Average
COLUMBIA RIVER BASIN					
Kootenai	Koocanusa	5,694.0	5,530.0	3,733.0	-
Flathead	Hungry Horse	3,428.0	3,440.0	2,366.0	3,293.0
	Flathead Lake	1,791.0	1,712.0	1,728.0	1,738.0
	Camas (4)	45.2	16.7	3.2	21.4
	Mission Valley (8)	100.3	66.6	26.7	22.7
Clark Fork	Georgetown Lake	31.0	30.7	27.7	28.4
	Lower Willow Creek	4.9	.8	.1	1.2
	Nevada Creek	12.8	-	-	4.8
	Noxon Rapids	334.6	327.5	315.3	323.7
Bitterroot	Como	34.9	6.1	.8	1.7
	Painted Rocks	31.7	27.3	18.6	26.5
MISSOURI RIVER BASIN					
Beaverhead	Clark Canyon	257.2	137.7	114.9	125.6
	Lima	84.0	-	33.2	27.1
Ruby	Ruby	38.8	13.2	-	10.8
Madison	Hebgen Lake	377.5	339.7	333.2	315.9
	Ennis Lake	41.0	38.1	38.8	35.4
Gallatin	Middle Creek	8.0	4.2	2.9	2.9
Missouri	Canyon Ferry	2,043.0	1,472.0	1,786.0	1,742.0
	Hauser & Helena	61.9	61.9	60.7	58.7
	Lake Helena	10.4	10.5	10.0	10.3
	Holter Lake	81.9	80.3	80.5	75.4
	Fort Peck Lake	18,910.0	18,420.0	14,980.0	14,550.0
Smith	Smith River	10.6	-	6.6	4.8
	Newlan Creek	12.4	11.6	3.1	-
Musselshell	Bair	7.0	-	3.0	3.0
	Martinsdale	23.1	-	10.4	7.8
	Deadman's Basin	72.2	-	15.1	32.5
Sun	Gibson	99.0	49.1	2.2	31.0
	Willow Creek	32.2	25.7	11.9	17.7
	Pishkun	32.0	19.8	16.8	16.1
Marias	Lower Two Medicine	11.9	11.8	-	-
	Four Horns	19.2	13.1	-	-
	Swift	30.0	12.0	1.4	13.9
Milk	Lake Frances	111.9	94.0	29.8	78.9
	Elwell (Tiber)	1,347.0	629.3	532.5	642.9
	Beaver Creek	3.5	2.1	1.6	-
	Fresno	127.2	85.7	23.4	66.9
	Nelson	66.8	49.8	6.5	43.9
	Lake Sherburne	66.2	16.7	12.5	6.9
Yellowstone	Mystic Lake	21.0	19.9	17.9	20.9
	Cooney	27.4	14.6	3.5	12.9
	Tongue River	68.0	20.1	20.1	24.9
	Big Horn Lake	1,356.0	1,042.0	931.1	977.9







INDEX to MONTANA SNOW COURSES and DATA SITES

Drainage Basin & Snow Course			Sensors in Addition to Snow Course 1/			Range	Typ.	Sec.	Elev.	Number	Measure Dates 2/			Measure By 3/
Drainage Basin & Snow Course	Number	Elev.	Range	Typ.	Sec.	Elev.	Typ.	Sec.	Elev.	Number	Measure Dates 2/	Measure By 3/		
MISSOURI RIVER BASIN														
BEAVERHEAD RIVER														
Bear River	12008	8850	6	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12008	8850	3,4,5	1	12008	
Bear River	12009	8850	12	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12009	8850	3,4,5	1	12009	
Bear River	12010	8850	22	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12010	8850	3,4,5	1	12010	
Bear River	12011	8850	34	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12011	8850	3,4,5	1	12011	
Bear River	12012	8850	46	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12012	8850	3,4,5	1	12012	
Bear River	12013	8850	58	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12013	8850	3,4,5	1	12013	
Bear River	12014	8850	70	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12014	8850	3,4,5	1	12014	
Bear River	12015	8850	82	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12015	8850	3,4,5	1	12015	
Bear River	12016	8850	94	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12016	8850	3,4,5	1	12016	
Bear River	12017	8850	106	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12017	8850	3,4,5	1	12017	
Bear River	12018	8850	118	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12018	8850	3,4,5	1	12018	
Bear River	12019	8850	130	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12019	8850	3,4,5	1	12019	
Bear River	12020	8850	142	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12020	8850	3,4,5	1	12020	
Bear River	12021	8850	154	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12021	8850	3,4,5	1	12021	
Bear River	12022	8850	166	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12022	8850	3,4,5	1	12022	
Bear River	12023	8850	178	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12023	8850	3,4,5	1	12023	
Bear River	12024	8850	190	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12024	8850	3,4,5	1	12024	
Bear River	12025	8850	202	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12025	8850	3,4,5	1	12025	
Bear River	12026	8850	214	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12026	8850	3,4,5	1	12026	
Bear River	12027	8850	226	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12027	8850	3,4,5	1	12027	
Bear River	12028	8850	238	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12028	8850	3,4,5	1	12028	
Bear River	12029	8850	250	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12029	8850	3,4,5	1	12029	
Bear River	12030	8850	262	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12030	8850	3,4,5	1	12030	
Bear River	12031	8850	274	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12031	8850	3,4,5	1	12031	
Bear River	12032	8850	286	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12032	8850	3,4,5	1	12032	
Bear River	12033	8850	298	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12033	8850	3,4,5	1	12033	
Bear River	12034	8850	310	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12034	8850	3,4,5	1	12034	
Bear River	12035	8850	322	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12035	8850	3,4,5	1	12035	
Bear River	12036	8850	334	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12036	8850	3,4,5	1	12036	
Bear River	12037	8850	346	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12037	8850	3,4,5	1	12037	
Bear River	12038	8850	358	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12038	8850	3,4,5	1	12038	
Bear River	12039	8850	370	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12039	8850	3,4,5	1	12039	
Bear River	12040	8850	382	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12040	8850	3,4,5	1	12040	
Bear River	12041	8850	394	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12041	8850	3,4,5	1	12041	
Bear River	12042	8850	406	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12042	8850	3,4,5	1	12042	
Bear River	12043	8850	418	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12043	8850	3,4,5	1	12043	
Bear River	12044	8850	430	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12044	8850	3,4,5	1	12044	
Bear River	12045	8850	442	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12045	8850	3,4,5	1	12045	
Bear River	12046	8850	454	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12046	8850	3,4,5	1	12046	
Bear River	12047	8850	466	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12047	8850	3,4,5	1	12047	
Bear River	12048	8850	478	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12048	8850	3,4,5	1	12048	
Bear River	12049	8850	490	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12049	8850	3,4,5	1	12049	
Bear River	12050	8850	502	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12050	8850	3,4,5	1	12050	
Bear River	12051	8850	514	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12051	8850	3,4,5	1	12051	
Bear River	12052	8850	526	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12052	8850	3,4,5	1	12052	
Bear River	12053	8850	538	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12053	8850	3,4,5	1	12053	
Bear River	12054	8850	550	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12054	8850	3,4,5	1	12054	
Bear River	12055	8850	562	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12055	8850	3,4,5	1	12055	
Bear River	12056	8850	574	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12056	8850	3,4,5	1	12056	
Bear River	12057	8850	586	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12057	8850	3,4,5	1	12057	
Bear River	12058	8850	598	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12058	8850	3,4,5	1	12058	
Bear River	12059	8850	610	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12059	8850	3,4,5	1	12059	
Bear River	12060	8850	622	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12060	8850	3,4,5	1	12060	
Bear River	12061	8850	634	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12061	8850	3,4,5	1	12061	
Bear River	12062	8850	646	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12062	8850	3,4,5	1	12062	
Bear River	12063	8850	658	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12063	8850	3,4,5	1	12063	
Bear River	12064	8850	670	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12064	8850	3,4,5	1	12064	
Bear River	12065	8850	682	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12065	8850	3,4,5	1	12065	
Bear River	12066	8850	694	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12066	8850	3,4,5	1	12066	
Bear River	12067	8850	706	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12067	8850	3,4,5	1	12067	
Bear River	12068	8850	718	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12068	8850	3,4,5	1	12068	
Bear River	12069	8850	730	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12069	8850	3,4,5	1	12069	
Bear River	12070	8850	742	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12070	8850	3,4,5	1	12070	
Bear River	12071	8850	754	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12071	8850	3,4,5	1	12071	
Bear River	12072	8850	766	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12072	8850	3,4,5	1	12072	
Bear River	12073	8850	778	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12073	8850	3,4,5	1	12073	
Bear River	12074	8850	790	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12074	8850	3,4,5	1	12074	
Bear River	12075	8850	802	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12075	8850	3,4,5	1	12075	
Bear River	12076	8850	814	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12076	8850	3,4,5	1	12076	
Bear River	12077	8850	826	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12077	8850	3,4,5	1	12077	
Bear River	12078	8850	838	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12078	8850	3,4,5	1	12078	
Bear River	12079	8850	850	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12079	8850	3,4,5	1	12079	
Bear River	12080	8850	862	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12080	8850	3,4,5	1	12080	
Bear River	12081	8850	874	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12081	8850	3,4,5	1	12081	
Bear River	12082	8850	886	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12082	8850	3,4,5	1	12082	
Bear River	12083	8850	898	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12083	8850	3,4,5	1	12083	
Bear River	12084	8850	910	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12084	8850	3,4,5	1	12084	
Bear River	12085	8850	922	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12085	8850	3,4,5	1	12085	
Bear River	12086	8850	934	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12086	8850	3,4,5	1	12086	
Bear River	12087	8850	946	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12087	8850	3,4,5	1	12087	
Bear River	12088	8850	958	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12088	8850	3,4,5	1	12088	
Bear River	12089	8850	970	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12089	8850	3,4,5	1	12089	
Bear River	12090	8850	982	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12090	8850	3,4,5	1	12090	
Bear River	12091	8850	994	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12091	8850	3,4,5	1	12091	
Bear River	12092	8850	1006	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12092	8850	3,4,5	1	12092	
Bear River	12093	8850	1018	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12093	8850	3,4,5	1	12093	
Bear River	12094	8850	1030	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12094	8850	3,4,5	1	12094	
Bear River	12095	8850	1042	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12095	8850	3,4,5	1	12095	
Bear River	12096	8850	1054	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12096	8850	3,4,5	1	12096	
Bear River	12097	8850	1066	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12097	8850	3,4,5	1	12097	
Bear River	12098	8850	1078	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12098	8850	3,4,5	1	12098	
Bear River	12099	8850	1090	16S	11W	8850	S.P.T.	1	12099	8850	3,4,5	1	12099	
Bear River	12100	8858												

# Agencies and Organizations Cooperating in Montana Snow Surveys

## GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

### Canada:

Water Survey of Canada, Calgary, Department of the  
Environment  
Water Resources Service, Department of Lands, Forests  
and Water Resources, British Columbia  
Alberta Environment, Edmonton, Alberta

### Federal:

Department of the Army  
Corps of Engineers  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Soil Conservation Service  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
NOAA, National Weather Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bonneville Power Administration  
Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Bureau of Reclamation  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Geological Survey  
National Park Service

## STATE

Montana Conservation Districts  
Montana Department of Fish and Game  
Montana Department of Natural Resources and  
Conservation  
Montana State University - Agricultural Experiment  
Station  
University of Montana - School of Forestry  
DNRC - State Forester

## PRIVATE

Montana Power Company  
Butte Water Company  
The Anaconda Company

Other organizations and individuals furnish valuable  
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is gratefully acknowledged.

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